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AMCONSUL HYDERABAD
AMCONSUL KOLKATA
AMCONSUL MUMBAI
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NOFORN

FOR DS/IP/SCA, DS/DSS/ITA, DS/DSS/OSAC, DS/CC, SCA/EX,
S/ES-O, AND CA

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TAGS: ASEC CASC IN PREL PTER

SUBJECT: MISSION INDIA EAC MEETING - 27 NOVEMBER 2008

Classified By: A/DCM John Davison for reason 1.4 (g)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The New Delhi Emergency Action Committee (EAC) convened on Thursday, November 27, 2008 in response to multiple terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India that targeted a number of locations in the southern part of the city including the historic Taj Mahal Palace & Tower Hotel (TAJ), Oberoi and Trident Hotels, Leopold Cafe, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) railway station, and Nariman House, the location of the Chabad Lubavitch center. The New Delhi EAC was joined via digital teleconference with EAC Mumbai, EAC Chennai, EAC Hyderabad, and EAC Kolkata. EAC New Delhi held a follow on meeting to discuss classified threat information. EAC New Delhi planned to reconvene with the EACs in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad at 1600 local time.

¶2. (SBU) EAC Mumbai provided background on the attacks. The attacks began at 2130 on Nov 26, 2008 and targeted multiple locations (at least 10) although they appeared to be focused on four main venues: TAJ, Oberoi and Trident Hotels, the Leopold Cafe, and Coma Hospital. Indian authorities have engaged in a number of gun battles with the terrorists at the sites, and local press are reporting upwards of 100 persons killed, including 12 police officers and six foreign nationals. The gunmen have reportedly seized hostages at the TAJ, Oberoi and Trident Hotels, which are co-located, and the Nariman House/Chabad Lubavitch center. Local police commandos from the National Security Guard (NSG) are reportedly planning assault operations and police and para-military units are conducting limited room clearing operations at the hotels.

¶3. (SBU) CONS MUMBAI confirmed one AMCIT in the hospital, Andriena VARAGONA, who is undergoing surgery for a bullet wound to the hand and thigh. CONS MUMBAI had received a second unconfirmed report that a second AMCIT, identified as Linda RAGSDALE, had been shot in the back at the Oberoi Hotel. CONS is attempting to confirm reports that AMCIT Rabbi Gavriel HOLTZBERG, wife Rivka HOLTZBERG, and child, had been taken hostage and may have been among those injured during the assault at the Nariman House/Chabad Lubavitch center. CONS MUMBAI is in contact with emergency room personnel at Mumbai area hospitals to confirm the conditions and nationalities of the injured and deceased.

4. (SBU) EAC MUMBAI reported that the TAJ had been damaged by

explosions, possibly as a result of grenades, and a fire in the old wing was under control. According to TAJ Hotel contacts, a newer portion of the hotel had been evacuated, however, gunfights between the attackers and Indian security forces were taking place in the old wing area. Mumbai reported that 10-20 hostages are believed to still being held. According to local press reporting, European Parliament Committee on International Trade delegates, including parliamentary representatives of the UK, Germany, Spain, Poland, and Hungary were staying at the Taj Mahal Hotel when it was attacked. CG Mumbai reported that the consulate received a number of calls from AMCITS who had been evacuated from the Taj Mahal, some by fire department personnel, as well as a number of AMCITS still hiding in portions of the hotel and seeking instruction or rescue.

5.(SBU) CG MUMBAI added that upwards of 100 persons were still in the Oberoi Hotel and 175 persons may be still in the Trident Hotel, both co-located at a site nearby to the Taj Hotel. Unconfirmed press reports claimed that 6 foreign hostages were being held on the 19th floor of the Oberoi. Unconfirmed reports claimed that approximately 20 attackers entered the Oberoi and police claim that 4 were subsequently killed and 9 apprehended.

6.(SBU) EAC Mumbai reported that the local police response has been less than positive, and at least 12 police officers have been reported killed including Hemant Karkare, Chief of the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) for Mumbai, and Ashok Kamte, Additional Commissioner of Police. The National Security Guard (NSG) and Special Forces units have established perimeters around the primary hostage sites and established security checkpoints. Police had recovered some inflatable rafts, explosives and ammunition from a dock area near the Taj Mahal Hotel, which tended to support reports that the attackers had arrived by boat.

7.(SBU) Mumbai reported that it has moved to a 24 hr operations schedule but may need staffing assistance if the crisis moves beyond 24-48 hours. ARSO-I Chennai, an FSNI from New Delhi, and A/Legat New Delhi have deployed to Mumbai to support law enforcement and security coordination. EAC Mumbai recommended that non-essential official travel to Mumbai be deferred for at least 48-72 hours. EAC New Delhi planned to reconvene with the EACs in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad at 1600 local time.

18. (SBU) CONS New Delhi has issued a Mission-Wide Warden Notice and reviewed the Country Specific Information (CSI) sheet for India. CONS New Delhi has also spoken with the CMS Taskforce about the need for immediate changes to the CSI. An official SMS notification has been disseminated by RSO. CONS reported that the British High Commission was setting up a collection point for British citizens and that the British High Commissioner was enroute to Mumbai.

19. (S) In the follow on meeting by EAC New Delhi, ORA provided a translation of the communique received from the MUJAHIDEEN HYDERABAD DECCAN. Legatt reported the FBI was providing investigative assistance in tracing the source email. Legatt added that FBI Director Mueller had already contacted Legatt and an offer of FBI technical and investigative assistance had already been passed to the director of the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB). ORA noted that the stance on security of major hotels should be evaluated in light of the attacks, recent threat reporting, and the apparent shift in attack complexity and targeting during the last six months.

10. (S) EAC New Delhi agreed to develop and forward by classified email a list of recommendations for law enforcement and other security cooperation for use by the CMS Taskforce and NSC.

11. (S) EAC New Delhi agreed that this series of attacks clearly indicated the target of the attacks were foreign nationals or locales frequented by foreign nationals. A number of press reports indicated that foreign nationals,

specifically US, UK, and Israeli citizens, had been separated from other guests or specifically singled out. It was the consensus of the EAC that the Department re-evalaute the current Indigenous Terrorism threat rating for Mission India posts on the Security Environment Threat List (SETL) in light of the current attack, ongoing threat reporting, and shift in attack complexity and targeting during the last six months.

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